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THE SALE OF ANTIQUE ARMS OF THE HEESWYK COLLECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC:

Dear Sir:—My attention was called to a notice in THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC of September last (p. 98), unfavorably reflecting upon the sale of the Heeswyk collection of arms. Being acquainted with the firm by whom it was held, as well as with the magnificent collection of which the objects sold formed part, and a believer in the old rule, *audi alteram partem*, I take exception, after inquiry and investigation, to what is stated in that notice, mainly on the authority—it seems—of a Mr. J. S. Schulman.

According to him "at least one-half of the collection was of nineteenth century manufacture." Leaving this statement for what it is worth, I translate from a French letter, written by Baron De Vinck, and of which I will speak later, as follows: "The few mistakes which your accuser (Mr. Schulman) points out are indeed only trifles: some lots of pikes, some battle-axes and hammers were not as described in the catalogue. How ridiculous this is! It lies with buyers to make their choice and to discover a good field for profits. The public and private exhibition gave them an opportunity to select with due knowledge. * * * If some buyer was not satisfied with his purchases he has his negligence or ignorance to blame for it."

The great interest shown at the exhibition of the arms, the animated bidding at the auction by private persons, antiquarians and agents of museums of Paris, Toulouse, Antwerp, Bergen, Amsterdam, etc., and the average prices brought, conclusively prove that the sale was a complete success, and that buyers acted with due knowledge.

Shortly after the auction there appeared in *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (*The New Rotterdam Gazette*), over the signature of J. S. Schulman, a violent article chiefly directed against Mr. Van Scheitema, a member of the firm of Frederick Muller & Co., of Amsterdam, who conducted the sale. The writer was evidently incited by *jalousie de métier*, and probably acted also as the mouthpiece of some auctioneers, disappointed like himself in not having been commissioned with this important sale. The object of his article apparently was to put blame and discredit on the auctioneers, Muller & Co., and to prejudice the public at large against their next sale of the second part of the Heeswyk collection, consisting of old portraits, old Dutch furniture, china, and delftware, etc., etc., which will take place in April or May, 1890. A marked copy of the *Courant* was mailed to Baron De Vinck de Winnezele, Director of the Museum Het Steen at Antwerp, one of the best authorities on arms in Europe, who spent days in examining the arms when on exhibition, was present at all the sessions of the auction, and made large purchases. This expert, under date of July 17, 1890, wrote a letter to Mr. Van Scheitema which shows that, *instead of concurring in Mr. Schulman's assertion, he totally refutes it*. That letter was also published in *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, and undoubtedly read by Mr. Schulman but—he held his peace.

We refer those who wish to know more about the famous Heeswyk collection of arms to an interesting article in the *Zeitschrift für Historische Waffenkunde*, III., 1890, from the pen of Dr. Boehme, Director of the Royal and Imperial Museum at Vienna, unquestionably the greatest living connoisseur of arms.

The reputation at home and abroad of the old firm of Frederick Muller & Co., for honesty, solidity and efficiency, is too firmly established for them to need either commendation or praise.

In conclusion: Mr. J. S. Schulman is no authority on arms. He is a coin-dealer and auctioneer, living [not at Amsterdam, but at thirty miles distance from there] in the town of Amersfoort. It is said that he was once refused admission to a meeting of numismatics which the late Baron Van den Bogaerde had called at the Heeswyk castle; and he pretends that the executor or administrator of the baron's estate promised him charge of the auction, which, however, is emphatically denied by that gentleman. *Sapienti sat!* Mr. G. Van Aaken is an unknown quantity in the realm of antiquarian fame.

ADRIAN VAN HELDEN.

Vice-Consulate of the Netherlands,
Philadelphia, Dec., 1890.

The above clearly states the Muller side of the question as to the value of this collection. It is noticeable, however, that Baron de Vinck, who endeavors to break a lance for the firm which had charge of the sale, agrees that there were a number of articles misrepresented in the catalogue and naively adds: "It lies with buyers to make their choice and to discover a good field for profits * * * * if some buyer was not satisfied with his purchases he has his negligence and ignorance to blame for it."

And that is exactly what I pointed out in the notice in the September

number, cautioning intending purchasers. Catalogues had been sent to this country, inviting commissions for bids from the Catalogue, where a personal inspection, which Baron de Vinck himself states to be necessary, was impossible. I had indubitable authority (long before the Schulman article appeared) for stating that many of the antiquities had been disposed of at private sale and replaced by imitations, which latter seems to be conceded.

Unless foreign auction-houses will guarantee the reliability of their catalogues, the lots being as described, I will continue to caution intending purchasers.

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS,
DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN.

November 8, 1890.

Mr. David C. Preyer, New York, N. Y.—

DEAR SIR: In sending my renewal for THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC I take the opportunity to write what I have often felt like saying to you as its editor. To me, stranded here so far from any art center, the arrival of your paper seems like a breath of that "artistic atmosphere" which so many say does not exist, but which we are out of it know to be a real thing. I take ten art magazines, but I always read yours from cover to cover first. And now, as in a recent number, you asked for suggestions, do not forget *we of the backwoods*, but keep us posted on the latest and most up-to-date, and give us the inside history of things so that when we read the magazines we may know where to distribute the salt. Very truly yours,

FRANK F. FREDERICK.

Professor Frederick's kindness is thoroughly appreciated.

TWO NOTES.

"WHEN."

When is a picture finished?

"When you get your check for it." "Never." "When you have to cudgel your brains to think what more to do with it." "When you reluctantly see it leave your own possession."

These are some answers made to this question, and the truth is, of course, to be found in a harmonious and serious combination of them all.

From an aesthetic standpoint no work of art is ever finished; for if perfected and finished it ceases to be the very thing ever striven for. A man who finished a picture in the absolute sense of the word could never again be tempted to touch a brush. Taking a glance downward, one recalls that deadly true adage: "Every finished picture is a ruined sketch."

Well do I recall the half regret in Josef Israel's voice before his great picture, "A Son of the Chosen People," where a pair of clasped hands were meant by this master to exhibit dejection and resignation. Fumbling over a portfolio he looked up at upwards of sixty sketches made for these same hands in the "finished" picture, and said aside: "There is something in each one of these hasty notes that I fair would have on the canvas." "But," he added,—perhaps trying to console himself,—"it may be that the hands in the big picture have something of all of these."

Does anyone think those wonderful hands were finished, or that Israel ever thought they could be?

When a picture gives an immense amount of pleasure to anyone who wants it to the point of buying it, the performance is as near finished as we can hope for; always understand, let us say, that this man is an art-lover, a connoisseur, if you please, and not simply one who "knows what he likes."

* * *
A COMPLAINT—AND A SUGGESTION.

Is it not time that the terminology in art should approach a just and accurate standard? Is it not time that the misleading phrase "watercolor drawings" should be reserved for the very few examples of this particular branch of the art?

Before the father of watercolor painting, before Turner and that other genius, Girtin, astonished the world with their performances in a medium that had hitherto been but a humble handmaiden of architectural and antiquarian memoranda, these were, it goes without saying, nothing but drawings to which washes had been applied in a subdued and helpful fashion.

But thenceforward watercolor painting assumed a position, a dignity, a breadth, demanded a technique and gathered around its standard such a galaxy of noble artists that only the ignorant or those who wilfully misunderstand can speak of it in deprecatory terms, assign it a secondary place, or patronizingly criticise the outcome of the aquarellist as "watercolor drawings."

It irks me to read a dilettante criticism where works of art,—though done on paper with watercolors—are designated, smirkingly, charming, graceful, or pretty watercolor drawings. I protest against it, and hope to see the term kept for application to the proper things, namely, the architects' lightly tinted elevations, and the archaeologists' suggestively shadowed, accurate and historical sketches.

LEIGH HUNT.